RCMP UNDERUSE ANTI-CHILD PORN CASH, PG4

Entertainment

Wes Anderson's Mr. Fox fantastic
pg 20

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Celebrity Buzz

Pattinson's 'stink' paparazzi ploy?
pg 22

Crack use explodes: Local study

Most addicts score in 10 min.

JEFF HODSON
jeff.hodson@metronews.ca

Crack cocaine use among drug addicts is rising rapidly in Vancouver with more than 80 per cent claiming to be able to score the drug within 10 minutes, a decade-long study on drug use in the city revealed yesterday.

The report, Drug Situation in Vancouver, found the prevalence of daily crack cocaine smoking jumped to 41.7 per cent in 2007 among survey participants, up from a mere 3.5 per cent eleven years earlier.

"In the city, the No. 1 problematic drug of abuse is crack," said Evan Wood, a co-author of the study.

"It's not just Vancouver where crack use has exploded. It's a national phenomenon, crack is in Canada and it's a huge, huge problem."

The report found crack was easy to get, easier than crystal meth, heroin and powder cocaine.

About 85 per cent of addicts claimed they could get crack within 10 minutes, compared to heroin or powder cocaine, which 70 per cent of addicts claimed they could get within 10 minutes.

Drug usage

- While 55 per cent of street youth can score crystal meth in 10 minutes, more than 80 per cent said they could score pot in the same amount of time.
- 84 per cent of HIV-negative injection drug users can score crack in 10 minutes.
- 72 per cent of HIV-positive injection drug users can score heroin in 10 minutes.

The rise of crack use, said Wood, a researcher with The B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, has led to an increased risk of HIV transmission through shared pipes and injuries like burned lips.

Last month, the Centre recommended looking at inhalation rooms, where addicts can smoke crack under the supervision.

The report also noted a marked increase in the smoking and injecting of crystal meth, particularly among street youth.

In 2007, 18 per cent of street youth reported using crystal meth daily, compared to 13 per cent who smoked crack daily. Street kids were also able to score crystal meth easier than older addicts.

Proposed cuts **Midwifery**

KRISTEN THOMPSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Dreighton Thiessen, 3, holds a sign in support of UBC's midwifery program at Seaforth Peace Park in Vancouver yesterday, while Michelle Corcos looks on. Around 50 women, with their babies in tow, marched across the Burrard Street Bridge to protest proposed cuts to the program. Story, page 2.

Delahunty bags Palin in Ohio outback

HEALTH CARE Marg Delahunty has braved the wilds of the American Midwest to come face-to-face with Sarah Palin who told her Canada should "dismantle" its public health-care system.

Comedian Mary Walsh's beloved character buttonholed the former Alaska governor at a recent book-signing in Columbus, Ohio, only to be strong-armed away from Palin by a cabal of security guards.

The action was documented on last night's This Hour Has 22 Minutes.

Walsh and her crew then waited close to where Palin's bus was parked.

Palin strolled over, looking down on Walsh and her crew to tell them that "Canada needs to dismantle its public health-care system and allow private enterprise to get involved and turn a profit."

"Basically, she said government should stop doing the work that private enterprise should do," Walsh said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Mary Walsh, as Marg Delahunty

News on the Move

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Travel pg 11

Doin' the L.A. hipster trip

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Man arrested in Surrey Six slaying day after giant poker win

A Cloverdale man was arrested in connection to a 2007 mass murder at a Surrey highrise a day after he won one of B.C.'s largest poker tournaments.

Sephon Sek, 30, was charged yesterday with manslaughter and break and enter for his alleged role in the October 2007 slayings of six people at the Balmoral Tower in Whalley.

On Sunday night, Sek celebrated after winning the B.C. Poker Championship at Richmond's River Rock Casino. He bested 680 players, including a number of professional international poker stars, and won $364,364.

Howard Blank, a vice-president with Great Canadian Gaming, the company that owns the casino, said RCMP requested, through the B.C. Lottery Corporation, that the casino hold on to the funds.

GREAT CANADIAN GAMING

Sephon Sek on Sunday.

"Before he could come pick up his cheque he was arrested," Blank said. "He has not received his winnings." Sek was not known to the casino, he added, and was just one of the many people who entered the tournament.

His arrest on Monday comes almost eight months after a man pleaded guilty and three others were charged in the murders.

Eileen Mohan, the mother of Chris Mohan, one of two slain innocent bystanders, applauded the work of investigators.

"We're trying to live day-by-day with one of the members of our family gone away — snatched away — from us and any word like this is certainly uplifting," Mohan said.

JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

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Local

Dance show seeking new recruits

Get your dancing feet and jazz hands limbered up — So You Think You Can Dance Season 3 auditions are coming to Vancouver on Saturday. Host Leah Miller, left, and judges Jean Marc Genereux and Blake McGrath will be at the Centre in Vancouver for Performing Arts. Registration begins at 9 a.m. METRO VANCOUVER

METRO INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
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News in brief

MOVIES Films from the City of Vancouver Archives dating back to 1926 will be shown on the big screen for the first time on Sunday at Vancity Theatre. Two of the films were found in a time capsule removed from the Sunset Memorial Centre before it was demolished.

HOLDUP RCMP are on the hunt for a balaclava-clad man who tried to hold up a pub on Yale Road in Chilliwack on Monday night. The suspect entered the bar with a gun and left after noticing a table of eight to 10 male customers.

HIT AND RUN Police are looking for public help to solve a fatal pedestrian hit and run in Langley. A passing motorist noticed a man lying in the 5900 block of 200th Street on Monday night. The victim may have been homeless.

COMPLAINT The UBC student union has filed a UN complaint regarding rising tuition fees. The Alma Mater Society represents more than 45,000 students on the Point Grey Campus.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Blogs Former TFC midfielder Rohan Ricketts joins It's Called Football to discuss the season's locker room drama, and SpinDoctor on Ottawa's risky handling of torture allegations

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Midwife course faces squeeze

Moms, tots march over bridge to support UBC program

KRISTEN THOMPSON
kristen.thompson@metronews.ca

Around 50 tykes participated in their first mommy-and-me protest march over the Burrard Street Bridge yesterday in support of the University of B.C.'s midwifery program, which is facing funding cuts.

Sarah Munro, a doctorate student in public health at Simon Fraser University and one of the organizers of the march, said UBC's four-year-program — which only admits 10 first-year students a year — may not be accepting new students in 2010.

"(Midwives) deliver 10 per cent of babies in the province and that number is steadily rising." Sarah Munro, march organizer

"We need to continue to meet the needs of birthing mothers," Munro said, adding that demand for midwives is such that the program needs to admit more students, not fewer.

"(Midwives) deliver 10 per cent of babies in the province and that number is steadily rising."

Jen Closs, who is due on Dec. 30, said she was on a wait list for eight weeks before she found a midwife.

She said midwives have more time for their patients than busy doctors, and has found the experience more personal.

Lindsey Johnson, who gave birth to her son Colton a year ago, said she used a midwife so she could have a home water birth.

"It's so nice for a woman to have an option and I would like to have that option when I have a second baby," Johnson said.

"It's really hard to get a midwife because there aren't that many, and if they don't train more, it'll be harder."

Feenie eyeing gold in national cook-off

KRISTEN THOMPSON
kristen.thompson@metronews.ca

COMPETITION Vancouver chef Rob Feenie has a handful of culinary competition successes under his belt — including the title of Iron Chef America — but he still gets nervous going into cook-offs.

Last month, Feenie won the British Columbia Gold Medal Plates contest and he will be representing the province this weekend at the national competition, which will take place in Vancouver and raise money for the Canadian Olympic Foundation.

"It's not that I've gotten used to (competing), but I'm more comfortable with it," said Feenie, a 25-year veteran in the industry and Food Concept Architect at Cactus Club.

"When they asked me to do Iron Chef, my first response was 'No,' because I didn't think it was something I could do."

The top chefs from seven Canadian cities will be given a budget and a location to shop for ingredients, and have all day Friday to create a local dish to go with a mystery bottle of wine.

Two more contests are planned for Saturday, and the winner will eventually be crowned at the Sheraton Wall Centre that evening.

Feenie said despite his hesitation to compete, he enjoys a challenge and doesn't think having home-court advantage will give him a leg up in the competition.

"All the rules are the same (for all chefs)," he said.

Contest

- Rob Feenie's successor at Lumière, Dale McKay, took second place at the B.C. Gold Medal Plates contest last month.

KRISTEN THOMPSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Chef Rob Feenie presents a plate of sake-soy marinated sablefish at Cactus Club on East Broadway yesterday. Feenie will represent B.C. this weekend at a national culinary competition.

Hiker endures three days outdoors after fall on B.C. island

SURVIVOR A Regina man who waited days for help after falling and breaking his pelvis while hiking on a small B.C. island says the harrowing ordeal won't stop him from hiking again.

Twenty-six-year-old Jordan Nicurity says he spent three days shouting for help after the six-metre plunge in late October on Hornby Island, located between the B.C. mainland and Vancouver Island.

The photographer, who licked rain from brush in a meadow and even ate some bugs, says he believes he only lived because he had a warm sweater with him.

Nicurity says thoughts of his loved ones and not wanting to hurt them helped him survive as he slowly crawled toward help.

He was discovered by a group of hikers three days after the accident and flown to Vancouver General Hospital.

Nicurity, whose story has only just come to light, flies back to Regina tomorrow to begin his 18-month recovery.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rogers can't claim to be 'most reliable,' court rules

WIRELESS A court in British Columbia has ruled that Rogers Communications Inc. cannot continue to claim it has "Canada's most reliable" wireless network without qualification, a move that comes as competition in the cellphone market becomes even fiercer with the advent of the holiday shopping season.

Yesterday's ruling is largely a victory for Telus Corp., which asked the court to prevent Rogers from continuing to make the long-standing claim, arguing that Telus and Bell Canada network upgrades earlier this month made it impossible for Rogers to claim superiority.

B.C. Supreme Court Justice Christopher Grauer said in his ruling that he agreed with Telus' argument that Rogers couldn't make the claim based on information that has become outdated.

Grauer ordered the parties to work on the wording for a court order and reappear Friday.

Rogers said it plans to appeal the decision.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Senior arrested after woman found dead

STIG NIELSEN
for Metro Vancouver

SURREY A 74-year-old man has been arrested and a 69-year-old woman found dead in a case police are investigating as a domestic dispute.

The man was wounded and the woman dead when RCMP arrived at a townhouse complex in Surrey yesterday morning. Both appeared to have been stabbed.

The man was treated and taken to hospital, where he is currently being held in police custody.

RCMP spokesperson Cpl. Dale Carr said police are waiting for the man to recover before speaking with him.

"It would be one of our goals to see what was going through his mind at the time," said Carr.

Get tips on winter cycling — and free snacks — tomorrow
The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition will be handing out free hot drinks and snacks at the south end of the Burrard Street Bridge from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. tomorrow. Volunteers will be providing advice on winter riding gear and maintenance and collecting feedback on the Burrard Bridge bike lanes. METRO VANCOUVER

B.C. worst for child poverty for sixth year

Premier Gordon Campbell says he's not happy B.C. has the highest numbers of children living in poverty in Canada for the sixth year in a row, but he wasn't taking suggestions yesterday from social groups or the NDP on how to reduce those numbers.

In its 2009 Child Poverty Report Card, the advocacy group First Call said B.C. had 156,000 poor children in 2007 — a good year for the economy.

First Call said B.C.'s child-poverty rate has been the highest in Canada for six years and it's time the provincial government took action.

B.C. New Democrats called the child poverty numbers shameful and called for action in the legislature. But Campbell said the latest report revealed the lowest child-poverty rate in B.C. since 1991, and the numbers have been declining since 2003 — indications that his government's economic and social policies are working.

"We've seen continual improvement since 2003, and we're going to keep doing that by reducing taxes, increasing the number of jobs and investing in education," Campbell said.

"All of those are, I think, tools to reduce child poverty, and we're going to keep at it." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Province versus Canada

- In 2007, the proportion of poor children in B.C. was 18.8 per cent while the national child poverty rate was 15 per cent, according to Statistics Canada.

Crib deaths resulted from improper use: Manufacturer

SAFETY The head of a Richmond company behind the recall of 2.1 million cribs says his products are safe — if used properly.

Jim Moore, president and chief executive of Stork Craft Manufacturing Inc., said the four U.S. deaths announced alongside the recall of his drop-side cribs happened over the past nine years, and were found to be a result of improper use.

Yesterday, parents jammed Stork Craft's phone lines and crashed its website, scrambling for more information on the cribs.

The recall came after at least 15 infants, including three in Canada, were trapped in the drop-side part of the product.

In the U.S., four babies have died of suffocation as a result between 2001 and 2009. THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

CLARIFICATION ICBC does not refuse to issue driver's licences to people with unpaid transit fines as suggested by the ministry of the solicitor general yesterday. The Crown corporation said it can only request payment, not withhold licence renewal. METRO VANCOUVER

HEALTH Four more people have died in B.C. after getting the H1N1 flu, bringing the provincial death toll to 34 since April. Health officials say 29 of the patients had underlying medical conditions while four did not, and one case is still being investigated. Provincial deputy health officer Dr. Eric Young said yesterday there have been 109 more severe cases in the last week, requiring patients to be hospitalized. THE CANADIAN PRESS

RESCUE A B.C. Ferry crew took just eight minutes to rescue a 63-year-old man who jumped overboard from a ferry yesterday. The RCMP say the Queen of Burnaby was sailing from Powell River on the mainland to Comox on Vancouver Island when the man jumped. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Kitsilano Beach Park Playground

Thursday, December 3, 2009
5:00pm - 7:00pm
Kitsilano War Memorial Community Centre – Snowy's Lounge - 2690 Larch Street

You are invited to review and comment on the proposed concept plans for Kitsilano Beach Park Playground

Thank you to everyone who participated in the universal playground design workshop and open house held on Nov 12th. Your creative and unique ideas have informed Shane's Inspiration's concept plans for the playground at Kitsilano Beach Park. Please come out to the open house to review and comment on the proposed plans.

VANCOUVER BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

For further information, contact:
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Project Manager, Park Development
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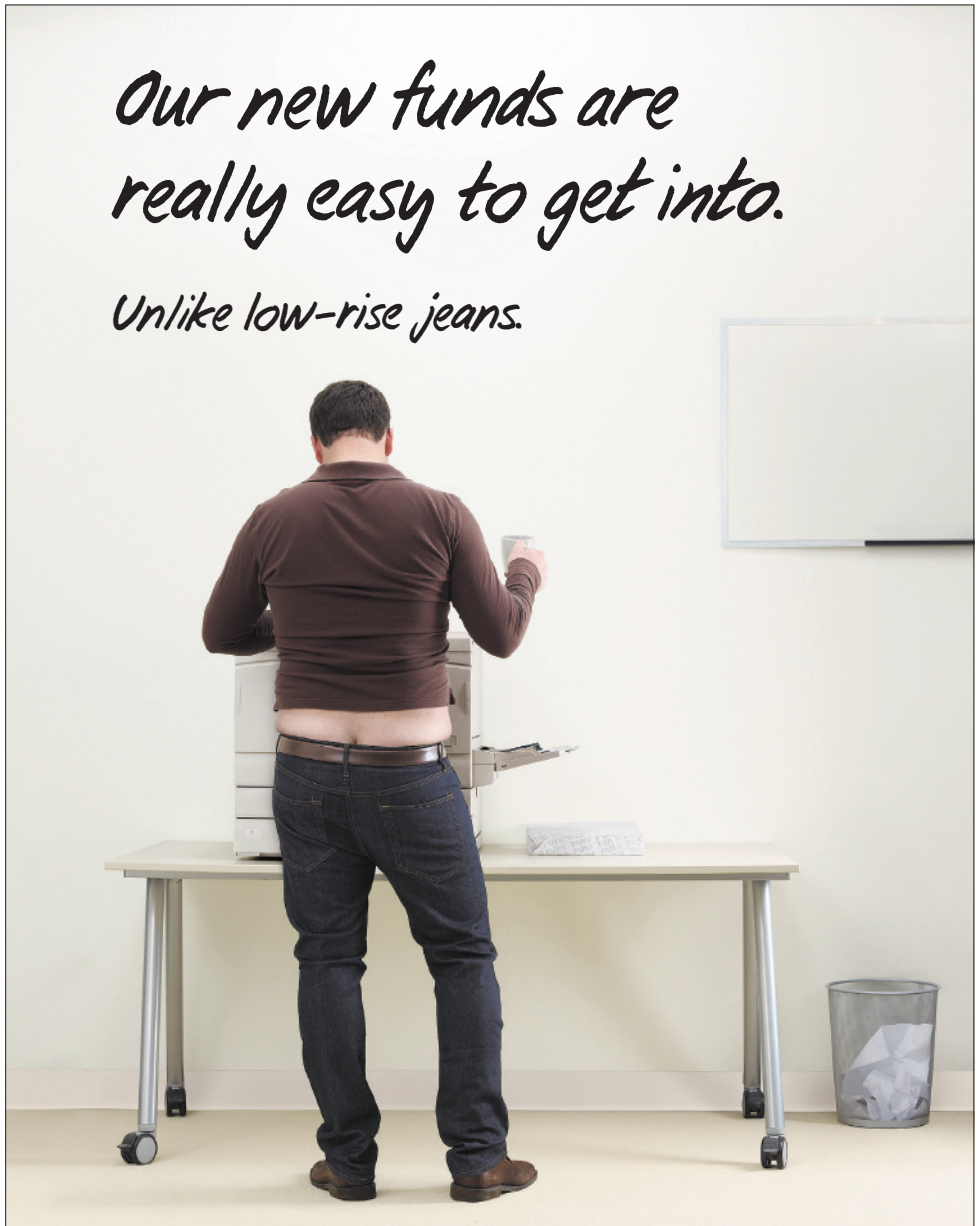

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Man was never a Nazi: Daughter

The family of Helmut Oberlander says he was never a Nazi and that he has not been charged by the federal government with any war crime. The Federal Court of Appeal released a ruling recently that ordered the federal cabinet to revisit its decision to strip Oberlander of his Canadian citizenship. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada

No evidence of theft: RCMP

The mystery of the missing mint gold is deepening. The Royal Canadian Mint announced yesterday that the RCMP has found no evidence of theft in the apparent disappearance of $15.3 million in gold and silver. The Mounties sent a letter stating their probe into the "unreconciled differences" in 2008 inventories provided no evidence to support further criminal investigation.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

TORTURE ACCUSATIONS Prime Minister Stephen Harper moved yesterday to calm the political storm surrounding the handover of Afghan prisoners, vowing to release all "legally available" documents related to the matter. But the assurance did little to appease opposition MPs, who fear they will get censored versions. They continued to hammer away on the issue of what the government knew in 2006-07 about the threat of torture in Afghan jails even as Canadian soldiers transferred detainees.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Cash to fight child porn not spent: Report

RCMP silent as document says they underused money four years running

The RCMP's vaunted project to nab more Internet child-porn offenders has been bogged down by technological setbacks and a chronic shortage of officers, says a newly released report.

The Mounties have also failed, for four years running, to spend about 40 per cent of the money budgeted for the project, an internal evaluation has found. The RCMP was given $34.4 million, spread over five years, but has not been using all the cash.

Repeated delays in creating a Canada-wide database of child-porn images accounts for about half of those unspent funds.

"There is currently no national standardized database," says the document prepared for the Public Safety Department.

"This fact contributes to inconsistent categorization of images across different jurisdictions within Canada and overseas."

The findings raise questions about proposed child-porn legislation, introduced yesterday by Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, that would require Internet service providers, or ISPs, to report tips about suspect websites, as well as to notify police and safeguard evidence.

However "suppliers of Internet services would not be required to send personal subscriber information under this statute," the department said in a release.

The decision to protect the personal information of suspects collides with the findings of the evaluation report, which says officers feel shackled by their inability to compel ISPs to release names and addresses of customers.

"At the moment, ISPs are often declining to provide a customer name and address to law enforcement due to fears of civil liability," the report found, noting that some investigations become frozen as a result. "The level of co-operation from ISPs has hindered investigations from becoming more comprehensive because investigations become 'un-actionable' when ISPs do not provide information."

A spokeswoman for the RCMP did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Justice Minister Rob Nicholson holds a new conference in Ottawa yesterday to make an announcement regarding legislation to assist fighting sexual exploitation of children. The federal government is introducing legislation that would require Internet service providers to report child pornography to police.

Took a while

- The July 2008 evaluation was obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act, following a nine-month delay.

Thomson landscape up for auction
A forest landscape by Tom Thomson with notations on the back is expected to be one of the highlights at an art auction to be held tonight in Toronto. "Winter Morning" will go up for sale at the Joyner Waddington's Fall Auction of Important Canadian Art. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Feds eye human trafficking at Olympics

VANCOUVER 2010 Games

The federal government is keeping an eye on Vancouver's Olympic Games to ensure they don't pose any greater human trafficking dangers than any other major event, Canada's public safety minister said yesterday.

"We have not seen any evidence of any special human trafficking plans that organized crime, say, might be utilizing around the Olympics, but it is a focus of our attention," said Peter Van Loan, flanked by U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano after a top-level meeting about border security attended by both the U.S. and Canadian ambassadors.

"My view is that human trafficking is not a problem only at the Olympics, it's a problem for Canada at all times at special events ... we're working with local police on the range of those issues."

Numerous human rights groups have been warning for years that the Vancouver Games could result in women being forced into prostitution by organized crime keen to profit from the sea of visitors who will flood into the Vancouver area in February.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

El Nino might impact Games

WEATHER While Canadians across much of the country are wondering what's happened to the arrival of wintry weather, the weather phenomenon that's responsible for the balmy climes is drifting like a questionable cloud over the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Environment Canada senior climatologist David Phillips said El Nino, which turns up every three to seven years, is one of the worries for the Games and its weather-dependent events such as alpine skiing, freestyle skiing, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined and snowboarding.

An El Nino year — characterized by slightly warmer ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific — usually brings a milder and drier winter for the western and central parts of Canada, said Phillips.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian airports to get new X-rays

SECURITY Canada's major airports, including Vancouver, will have new X-ray scanning gear in place for carry-on baggage by February that officials say could speed up the trip through security and make it easier to spot potential threats.

It also holds the potential of dialing back blanket restrictions on carrying liquids aboard flights, instituted after a foiled British-based plot to bomb jetliners using liquid explosives.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

VETS Ottawa is kicking in $100,000 to find out how many homeless veterans are living on Canada's streets. Veterans Affairs Canada anticipates there are about a dozen. But Minister Greg Thompson says one is too many. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cascades guarantees the performance of its products.

CONSUMER TRENDS. Cascades Tissue Group, manufacturer of tissue papers from 100% recycled fibres, guarantees the performance of Cascades Enviro® Extreme™ paper towels. In fact, Cascades will reimburse any purchaser who is not satisfied with the absorbing power of Cascades Enviro® Extreme™ paper towels.

More and more consumers are opting for Cascades Enviro® products because they are made from 100% recycled fibres. The production techniques developed by the recycling giant are among the most ecological anywhere.

In Canada, Cascades paper mills use six times less water than their competition. The average water consumption of Cascades paper mills in 2008 was 10 m^3/ton, whereas the industry average in Canada was 60 m^3/ton.

Conservation of water, a priceless resource essential to life on earth, is at the top of Cascades' list of environmental concerns. As a result, the company has completely eliminated the use of chlorine for bleaching fibres.

Choosing Cascades products comes down to the natural choice for those dedicated to protecting the environment without sacrificing quality. Cascades products made of recycled fibres offer the resistance and the absorption you are looking for.

Cascades Tissue Group is the only producer of tissue paper products to comply with the stringent requirements of the SMMI (Sustainable Manufacturing & Marketing Initiative) guidelines and that is PCF-certified (Processed Chlorine Free). This certification ensures follow-up control of all fibres and delivery of products that are manufactured from sustainable raw materials according to a chlorine-free process.

Since one of our deeply ingrained values at the company is protecting the environment, Cascades follows a clearly environmental course not only for surpassing the current ecological standards, but also for creating precedents for making our way into the future.

As a pioneer in recycling, Cascades decided to specialize in the production of products from recycled fibres when it was founded in 1964. For the company, collecting discarded materials and transforming them into new products represents the optimal way of closing the loop.

In its production process, Cascades recycles wastewater and reuses it in the production cycle. Thanks to this procedure, Cascades consumes 80% less water than the Canadian industry average.

The production processes of Cascades products reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Unique Absorbent Cells® technology allows Cascades Enviro Extreme 100% recycled fibre paper towels to keep their shape when wet, holding liquids in microcells for extreme absorbency.

Whether for recycling materials, reusing water, improving waste and air quality or energy efficiency, Cascades has established high standards in each of its operations with the ultimate goal of

During 2008, Cascades used 2.2 million tons of recycled fibres, which saved the equivalent of 17 million trees.

North River® hand towels and bathroom tissue products rank among the most ecological on the market. In fact, North River® is the first and only brand to hold Processed Chlorine Free, Green Seal™ and EcoLogo certifications.

Cascades Products Participate in the Preservation of many trees every year. Our manufacturing residue is currently used for agricultural fertilization and the restoration of degraded sites.

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* For all details, visit:
Simplegreenaction.ca

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French foreign minister praises Sudanese woman

France's foreign minister praised the courage of a journalist who has led a fight against a law in Sudan allowing for women to be flogged for wearing pants. Bernard Kouchner says Lubna Hussein is a model for showing the courage to rebel. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World

Prostitute takes aim at Berlusconi in book

The prostitute at the centre of Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi's sex scandal claims in a new book that she slept with him on the understanding he would help her set up a countryside inn but she got "nothing" in return. Patrizia D'Addario, left, whose memoir went on sale yesterday in Italy, writes she feels betrayed and has been frightened by strange threats, including the ransacking of her home, since she revealed this year that she had tape-recorded her purported encounter with Berlusconi. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'It is my intention to finish the job'

WASHINGTON Signalling an imminent decision on new troop levels for the Afghanistan war, U.S. President Barack Obama said yesterday he intends to "finish the job" on his watch and destroy terrorist networks in the region.

The president said he would announce his decision on how many additional soldiers to deploy to Afghanistan after U.S. Thanksgiving tomorrow. The White House is aiming for an announcement by Obama next week, either Tuesday or possibly Wednesday, in a national address. Congressional hearings will follow immediately.

"It is my intention to finish the job," Obama said of the war in Afghanistan that has been going on for eight years — since shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Animal sacrifice begins

200,000 to be slaughtered as Hindu festival begins in Nepal

The ceremony began with prayers in a temple by tens of thousands of Hindus before dawn yesterday. Then it shifted to a nearby corral, where in the cold morning mist, scores of butchers wielding curved swords began slaughtering buffalo calves by hacking off their heads.

Over two days, 200,000 buffaloes, goats, chickens and pigeons will be killed as part of a blood-soaked festival held every five years to honour Gadhimai, a Hindu goddess of power.

While cows are sacred and protected by law in Nepal, animal sacrifice has a long history in this overwhelmingly Hindu country and parts of neighbouring India. And while it is criticized by animal-rights protesters, the festival is defended as a centuries-old tradition. Many Nepalis believe that sacrifices in Gadhimai's honour will bring them prosperity. They also believe that by eating the meat, which is taken back to their villages and consumed during feasts, they will be protected from evil.

GEMUNU AMARASINGHE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A butcher prepares to kill a buffalo with his knife during a mass sacrifice ceremony in Nepal yesterday.

The ceremony, which goes back for generations, has enormous resonance in a country where the per capita income is about $25 a month and illiteracy is widespread.

Even many educated Nepalis see value in the tradition. Om Prasad, a banker, brought offerings of fruit and flowers to the festival, but said he believed people should be able to sacrifice animals if they want.

"It is their tradition, and it is fine if they continue to follow it. No one should try to tell them they can't follow what their ancestors did," he said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

BELGIUM With a caretaker holding his hand, a Belgian man who was diagnosed as comatose for 23 years typed out a message yesterday that he felt reborn after decades of loneliness and frustration. Car-crash victim Rom Houben was diagnosed as being in a vegetative state but appears to have been conscious the whole time, doctors said. An expert using a specialized type of brain scan says he realized Houben was conscious and provided him with the equipment to communicate.

Houben

BAGHDAD Google is documenting Iraq's national museum and will post photos of its ancient treasures on the Internet next year, the company announced yesterday. The museum was ransacked after Saddam Hussein's ouster in April 2003, and only reopened to visitors this year. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Another blackout in Rio

Rio de Janeiro's beach neighbourhoods lost power yesterday, two weeks after a blackout left more than 60 million people in the dark and raised questions about the city's ability to host 2016 Olympic Games. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UN men's group to take on violence against women

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a Network of Men Leaders yesterday to act as role models in the global campaign to end the "pandemic" of violence against women.

Ban said it is unacceptable that about 70 per cent of women experience some form of physical or sexual violence from men — "the majority from their husbands, intimate partners or someone they know."

He urged men from countries around the world to join the network and pledge to work to end violence against women and girls wherever it occurs, from the home to conflict areas.

Unless men change their attitudes and behaviour, he warned, "violence against women will continue."

His views were echoed in a video message from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African Nobel peace laureate and one of the 14 initial members of the network, who decried the many forms of violence against women and girls including trafficking, child marriage and domestic abuse.

"You are a weak man if you use your physical superiority to assault and brutalize women," Tutu warned.

"The society that permits violence against women is a society that is on the way out," he said.

"I will continue fighting until the end of my days for the right of women and girls to live a life free from violence and abuse."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

10th anniversary

- Ban Ki-moon spoke at the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which falls today.

Britain kicks off Iraq inquiry

LONDON An inquiry into Britain's role in the Iraq war started yesterday with top government advisers testifying that some American Bush administration officials were calling for Saddam Hussein's ouster as early as 2001 — long before sanctions were exhausted and two years before the U.S.-led invasion. Critics hope the hearings, which will call ex-prime minister Tony Blair and are billed as the most sweeping inquiry into the conflict, will expose alleged deception in the buildup to fighting. However, they won't establish criminal or civil liability. Bereaved families and activists have long called for an inquiry into the U.S.-led war that left 179 British soldiers dead. Blair will be questioned on whether he secretly backed George W. Bush's plan for invasion a year before Parliament authorized military involvement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Comment

More hot air and the denial twist

TheWestView

Unlike the baristas, bus drivers and people in the elevator, I have no idea what's going on with global warming.

I thought I did — once. I learned we were pumping tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. That increased the carbon dioxide count to record levels, unleashing a greenhouse effect that causes a rise in temperature, which has an impact on the delicate balance of nature.

But then it got political. Atmospheric carbon continues to reach record levels every year, but a whole bunch of clever people argue that climate change is a natural fluctuation in solar activity and there's nothing we can do about it.

Don't worry, be happy. Or something. I have no idea what the global warming deniers want to do; they're too busy denying. As far as I can tell, they don't want the rest of the world telling the developed nations — that's us — to reduce our carbon emissions. Let them clean up their own act first.

So is it better to whistle in the dark and let the planet take care of itself?

Unlike the baristas and bus drivers, I am not a climate scientist. Even if I were, I would probably not entirely agree with other scientists. It's hard enough to predict the local weather 24 hours in advance. The whole planet 50 to 100 years in advance? That's a job for a highly skilled climate expert like the guy at Starbucks.

The deniers are having an effect. A recent poll found the number of Americans who believe there is solid scientific evidence for global warming has decreased by 20 per cent to 57 per cent since 2007. Glaciers continue to melt, seas continue to warm, and climate continues to change. Just don't ask why.

So what happens now? Apparently, if we follow the deniers' advice, nothing. Business as usual. Kind of like Stephen Harper's government, which is merely relieved that the new greenhouse gas targets, originally set for the Copenhagen summit next month, have been postponed until the next round. Whew

Meanwhile, 4.4 new climate experts are born every second while the capacity of the planet is seriously overburdened by the 6.8 billion who already exist. That's a lot of expert hot air. I suppose we could try to cut it back and work together in the spirit of discovery before the oil runs out or, even worse, the water runs dry.

Or we could always just keep arguing. For that, we have the technology.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting; vancouverletters@metronews.ca.

Word on the street: Who do you think will win the Grey Cup?

Sam Cargnelli
age 19, Vancouver

A: The Riders (Saskatchewan) are going to win this Grey Cup. They play bigger, they hit harder and they are going to come out stronger.

Rikki Drynan
age 20, Vancouver

A: Saskatchewan will win, I think they are just playing better this year. Saskatchewan, I believe, have the better defence and they will win through.

Shawn Bergman
age 33, Vancouver

A: Montreal is going to win the Grey Cup because they are too powerful a team to stop. Saskatchewan doesn't stand a chance, the Montreal quaterback is just too good.

Stephan Handerek
age 31, Eastern Passage, N.S.

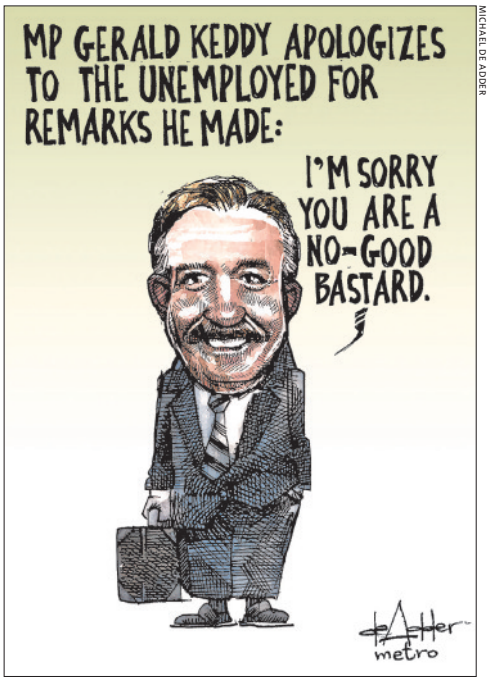
A: I'm going to go with Montreal because of Anthony Calvillo. He's the man. He's a proven performer.

Suzanne Desjarlais
age 33, Ottawa

A: I'd like to see Regina win, but probably Montreal because they're more consistent.

Brad Clarke
age 32, Edmonton

A: Montreal, because I don't like Saskatchewan fans. Don't mind the team but I don't like the fans.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

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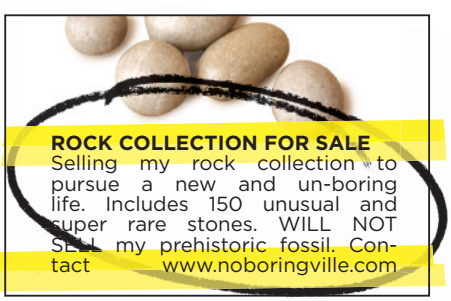
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Cheques to keep going round and round
A project by Canada's major banks to end the practice of couriering cheques around the country for processing, has been scrapped, CBC News Online reports. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Living standards drop 4.3 per cent: Report

The recession as experienced by individual Canadians has been significantly longer and worse than the official record indicates, says a new report.

An analysis by Toronto-based Dale Orr Economic Insight found that Canada's economy has been on a downward spiral since 2007, not just since the fall of 2008 when the economy began contracting.

That's because once population growth is taken out of the calculation of the size of the economy, per capital gross domestic product has been contracting since the beginning of 2008.

Orr said Tuesday a truer measure of both the economy and how it is experienced by Canadians is real gross domestic product per capita.

m.metronews.ca

Scan this barcode for more on Canada's falling standard of living.
Learn how to scan the barcode with the instructions at the top of pg 2

By that measure, Canadian standard of living fell both in 2008 and 2009 by a total of 4.3 per cent, or about one per cent more than the peak-to-trough drop in real GDP during the recession.

"From an individual's point of view, what really matters to them is not 'Is the economy growing?' but 'Is the economy growing enough so that there's more goods and services per person?'"

Because Canada's population has been growing at about 1.1 per cent per year, Orr says Canadians' standard of living fell slightly in 2008, when real GDP advanced 0.4 per cent, and tumbled this year by an estimated 3.5 per cent.

Orr said he compared his analysis on per capita GDP with another real-life measure, unemployment, and found an almost exact correlation. Ontario, Alberta and B.C. each had higher than average job losses, while Quebec's were below the national average.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

BMO reports Q4 profit tops $640M

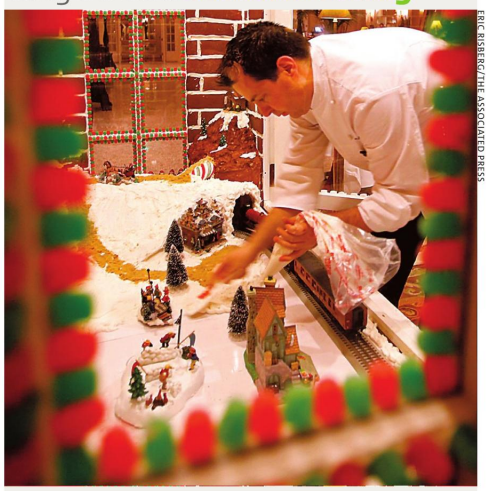
RESULTS Bank of Montreal said yesterday its latest quarterly profit rose 16 per cent from the year-earlier level as revenues increased, provisions for loan losses were reduced and its Canadian operations showed strong profit growth.

BMO, the first of Canada's big banks to report its fourth-quarter and year-end results for 2009, reported overall net income of $647 million or $1.11 for the quarter ended Oct. 31. That was up from $560 million or $1.06 a year ago.

Total revenue for the quarter increased $176 million or 6.3 per cent to $2.99 billion from $2.81 billion last year.

The revenue was $10 million ahead of analyst estimates. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Gingerbread Season's eating



ERIC RISBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Executive sous chef Derek Ingraham applies icing to a winter scene inside a two-story gingerbread house that will adorn the lobby of The Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco yesterday. The gingerbread house, which opens Saturday, is made from 4,000 pieces of gingerbread, 400 pounds of royal icing, 100 pounds of candy, and eight gallons of chocolate and houses a room to write letters to Santa.

EI claims up 63 per cent over year

BENEFITS The number of people receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits rose by 54,300, or 7.1 per cent in September after two months of declines.

The number of beneficiaries reached 818,000, up 63.5 per cent from October 2008 when employment hit its peak.

The largest year-over-year increases were in Ontario, B.C. and Alberta, most of them coming between October 2008 and June.

The number of initial and renewal claims received in September fell five per cent, or 14,700, to 280,700.

The number of beneficiaries more than doubled in several cities, with the fastest year-over-year increases in Calgary and Edmonton.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Microsoft's top finance executive to leave

Microsoft Corp. said its chief financial officer is departing at the end of the year and will be replaced by the man now responsible for the books at the division that produces Microsoft Office and other business programs. CFO Chris Liddell led an effort to slice $3 billion US in costs. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Business in brief

AUTOS General Motors Co. will present to unions today the restructuring plan for its Opel unit, with up to 9,500 jobs expected to be cut, Nick Reilly, the carmaker's top official in Europe said yesterday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

METRO HOCKEY POOL STANDINGS*

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NAME	LOCATION	GP	G	A	PTS
1. Christian Gagnon	NB, CA	193	98	128	226
2. Joanne Doiron	NB, CA	191	98	123	221
3. Kyle Turk	NS, CA	193	103	114	217
3. Paula Almeida-Stille		193	95	122	217
3. Stephen Stille	ON, CA	193	95	122	217
6. Rick Kit	ON, CA	191	93	121	214
7. Danny Chan	ON, CA	192	90	121	211
7. Stephanie Warren	NS, CA	191	93	118	211
9. Brian B	AB, CA	196	92	118	210
9. Edward Smith	NS, CA	186	94	116	210
11. Claude Brunelle	BC, CA	191	87	122	209
12. Jonathon Gremsperger	BC, CA	189	99	109	208
12. Neil Mann	ON, CA	188	102	106	208
12. Patrick Reed	AB, CA	190	96	112	208
15. B Fillmore	BC, CA	192	74	133	207

* Results exclude Quebec

markerzone.com metro

Toronto Star plans to cut 121 positions

Management at the Toronto Star newspaper has filed formal notice of a plan to contract out newsroom production work and cut 121 jobs in a bid to save $4 million a year.

"At a time of unprecedented business nightmares facing the Star and our industry — and despite the many operational challenges associated with outsourcing — we believe there are sound business reasons for this proposal," Star editor Michael Cooke wrote in a memo to employees on Monday.

The move calls for cutting 70 full-time and eight part-time editorial jobs to tighten costs at Canada's largest circulation daily paper, which has 390 employees in the editorial department.

> **"No one in the newsroom will receive a layoff notice until January."**
> Michael Cooke, editor

The round of cuts could also affect 39 full-time and four part-time pre-publishing technicians as the company considers contracting out work out to Pagemasters North America, a unit of The Canadian Press, according to Toronto Star spokesman Bob Hepburn.

The union at the newspaper, which is owned by Torstar Corp., now has 30 days to propose alternatives to avoid or alter either the contracting out of the work or the eventual layoff of staff. "If we cannot agree on an alternative, and the outsourcing proceeds, no one in the newsroom will receive a layoff notice until January, at the earliest," Cooke wrote. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shoppers gloomy heading into holidays

ECONOMY Americans' confidence in the economy improved slightly in November, but shoppers remain gloomy heading into the traditional start of the holiday shopping season amid a weak job market, according to a monthly survey.

The Conference Board said yesterday that its consumer confidence index edged up to 49.5.

One component of the Conference Board's confidence gauge that measures shoppers' outlook over the next six months increased slightly to 68.5 from 67.0 in October.

"Income expectations remain very pessimistic and consumers are entering the holiday season in a very frugal mood," said Lynn Franco, director of The Conference Board Consumer Research Center in a statement. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nortel GSM businesses on auction

SALE Another piece of the former Nortel Networks Corp. empire hit the auction block as the Global System for Mobile (GSM) business was offered to interested bidders.

The delayed auction got underway yesterday morning, but a winner had yet to be announced by the company in the early evening.

The global GSM/GSM-R business includes patents predominantly used in the GSM business and granting of non-exclusive licenses of other relevant patents in an open auction.

Nortel had planned to sell the division last week, but decided to bump the date to make room for its optical networking and carrier Ethernet units auction. Ciena's won the optical networking auction and will pay $769 million US for the division.

Nortel has been selling off its divisions after filing for creditor protection in January. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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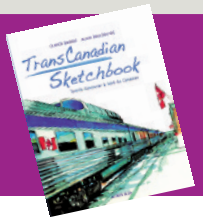
vancouver 2010 CHEVROLET OFFICIAL VEHICLE

Give yourself more time

Richard Branson building luxury resort in New Jersey
A new luxury resort is opening on an estate in New Jersey with Sir Richard Branson as a partner. The Natirar resort will be set in a 40-room mansion on 36 hectares of a 202-hectare property in Somerset County, N.J. The estate was once owned by King Hassan II of Morocco. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

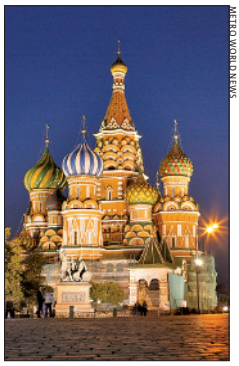
Travel



Discovering Canada by train

On a beautiful day in December, journalist Olivier Barrot and illustrator Alain Bouldouyre embarked on a journey by train. They travelled across the Prairies and the Rockies, from Toronto to Vancouver, from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean. In minus thirty degree weather, over four days, the took their time to write, to draw and to dream. The result is a book of stunningly executed illustrations and captivating stories the voyage by train across our nation. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: BEN.RYCROFT@METRONEWS.CA


METRO WORLD NEWS

Moscow's cathedral's and its Red Square are must sees in the Russian capital.

Craziness a sight to be seen in Russia

ROMINA MCGUINNESS
Metro World News

MOSCOW The Muscovites' love of all that is brash and flash is something that cannot be denied. Long forced to keep a low profile under Soviet rule, Moscow is now a place bursting with quirky and sometimes crazy things to see and do.

Here are the top four:

1. The heart of history
The Kremlin and Red Square form a historical hub from which the rest of the city (streets, shops, sidewalks) seems to effortlessly emanate. Venture into both and soak in the Russia of past years.

2. Kitsch is Cool
Muscovites love anything with a theme, the more bizarre the better. Dine like a Ukrainian peasant herder at Shinok. Decorated like a farmhouse, the dining room features haystacks and chicken coops and live barn animals.

3. Bring on the Ballet
Ballet, the epitome of elegance is best experienced at the Bolschoi Theatre (www.bolshoi.ru). The greatest ballet in the world the performances here, such as the Nutcracker, are mesmerizing.

4. Vodka Vapours
Whether they were built as a nationwide hangover cure or not Moscow's bathhouses are the perfect way to clear the mind and jump-start the body. Sandunovskiye (www.sanduny.ru) is the most reputable bathhouse in town.

LA: The true hipster experience

Go for the sunshine and beaches, stay for the vintage clothing shops and dive bars

LIA HAMA
Metro World News

If you're dodging the raindrops and cursing the cold right now maybe a Los Angeles break is what you need. Whether you want to see where the movies are made, gawk at the Hollywood set, or just hang out on the beach, the California weather is guaranteed. Like the song says, it never rains in sunny California.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Venice Beach is as much known for its surfing as it is for its collection of odd characters.

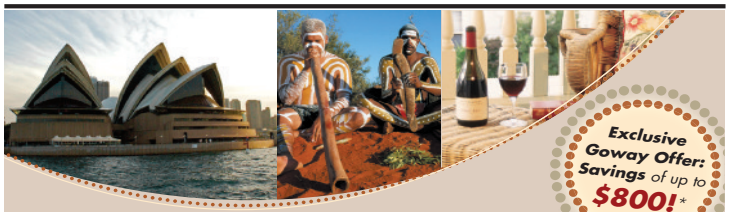
The truly LA thing to do is couch surf: call up a friend and stay in their living room until you've worn out your welcome. Failing that, for the broke hipster looking for a home away from home, there's the Venice Beach Suites & Hotel with rooms from around $105.

Located on the beach amid the bustling Venice boardwalk it's an ideal place to start, but before you make your reservations, be warned: the Venice boardwalk is part tourist trap, part congregating place for bonafide weirdos.

When you're ready to shop, take a trip to Long Beach to shop alongside Hollywood set designers and costumers on Retro Row, the strip of East 4th between Junipero and Cherry Avenues that hosts over a dozen vintage clothing stores, furniture shops, and décor places.

After you've got your shopping fix, you'll need to get your eat on.

Look no further than Cicada. Housed in a gorgeous 1928-built Art Deco masterpiece with food that matches the atmosphere, Cicada is the antithesis of LA's trendy restaurant scene: old fashioned grandiose rather than insufferably hip. If you're into the American dive bar experience, you can't leave LA without stopping by Frank N Hanks in Koreatown (213-383-2087), which serves up ultra-cheap beer and cocktails to a super-arty crowd. Best of all, they have one of the best jukeboxes in the city.



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Maicon banned for two games

Inter Milan fullback Maicon has been banned for two games after being sent off for abusing a linesman at the weekend. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sports

EDITOR: DON.MCHOULL@METRONEWS.CA

Invaluable asset

Johnson may not score, but he contributes in other ways

TheHockeyNews

thehockeynews.com

DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES

Despite receiving some of the lowest ice time on the team, Ryan Johnson is third on the Canucks in blocked shots, with 28.

While superstar players sure are fun to watch zip around the ice whipping out a bag of tricks with the puck that almost convinces you a freestyle stickhandling event could become part of the Olympics, they generally aren't my favourite players.

Come playoff time in close matchups, opposing star players often cancel each other out in terms of the effect they have, with some exceptions. It's usually the role players, determined to step up their game, who control the tide and make key differences en route to victory.

Last season you look around the NHL at players like Max Talbot, Dustin Byfuglien, Troy Brouwer, Dan Cleary and Chad LaRose and you have to wonder how their teams would have done without them and their ilk.

Enter Ryan Johnson, the craziest, toughest, most unselfish soldier in the NHL today.

Instead of dangling and dodging defence, this guy sacrifices his personal well-being by flinging his seemingly tiny 6-foot-1, 202-pound frame at pucks in any way possible. How many times do you see this guy launch himself in front of a puck and cringe for him?

Take a look at the stats. Johnson ranks near the bottom on the Canucks with an average of 11:15 in ice time per game, typical for a guy in his role. Yet, Johnson ranks third on the team in blocked shots with 28, nine behind team leader Willie Mitchell, a stand-up difference-maker in his own right.

Not only do the two players ahead of Johnson in blocked shots (Mitchell and Alexander Edler, both defencemen) have four more games played each, but they also average at least 10 minutes more ice time per game. Ten minutes! On top line duty! From a position that parks itself in front of the net!

He's never going to be a big point-scorer and he'll never even win a Selke, but Johnson is a valuable depth commodity for any playoff team. Can you believe that Johnson, along with a sixth-round pick, was traded to Florida back in 2001 for Vaclav Prospal, a player currently producing at better than a point per game pace in New York?

Points are glamorous and there is no downside to production, but if you already had a top line, let me ask you: Who would you rather have in your playoff lineup?

The Hockey News thn.com

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OVERALL STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
d-Pittsburgh	24	16	8	0	74	68	32
d-Washington	24	13	5	6	85	73	32
d-Ottawa	21	12	6	3	66	62	27
New Jersey	21	14	6	1	58	48	29
Buffalo	20	12	6	2	54	50	26
Boston	23	11	8	4	57	58	26
Philadelphia	21	12	8	1	73	59	25
Tampa Bay	21	9	5	7	56	63	25
NY Rangers	23	12	10	1	72	65	25
NY Islanders	24	9	8	7	67	74	25
Montreal	24	12	11	1	62	69	25
Atlanta	20	10	7	3	71	61	23
Florida	22	10	9	3	62	72	23
Toronto	22	4	11	7	57	82	15
Carolina	23	5	13	5	53	83	15

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	GP	W	L	OL	GF	GA	Pt
d-San Jose	25	16	5	4	85	62	36
d-Chicago	22	15	5	2	70	49	32
d-Colorado	24	14	7	3	74	71	31
Calgary	22	13	6	3	69	62	29
Dallas	23	11	6	6	70	65	28
Los Angeles	24	13	9	2	73	75	28
Nashville	22	13	8	1	53	57	27
Columbus	23	12	8	3	72	84	27
Phoenix	24	13	10	1	59	59	27
Detroit	22	11	7	4	68	64	26
VANCOUVER	**23**	**12**	**11**	**0**	**67**	**60**	**24**
Edmonton	24	10	11	3	72	75	23
St. Louis	21	8	9	4	50	54	20
Anaheim	22	8	11	3	63	75	19
Minnesota	22	8	12	2	54	68	18

d - division leaders ranked 1-2-3 regardless of points

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Montreal 5 Columbus 3

TODAY'S GAMES

Ottawa at New Jersey
Buffalo at Washington
Toronto at Tampa Bay
Philadelphia at N.Y. Islanders
Montreal at Pittsburgh
Atlanta at Detroit
N.Y. Rangers at Florida
St. Louis at Dallas
Boston at Minnesota
Nashville at Colorado
Los Angeles at Edmonton
Phoenix at Calgary
Carolina at Anaheim
Chicago at San Jose

NBA

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Toronto 123 Indiana 112
Denver 101 New Jersey 87
Golden State 111 Dallas 103
Oklahoma City 104 Utah 94
Washington 108 Philadelphia 107
New York at L.A. Lakers

NFL

MONDAY'S RESULTS

Tennessee 20 Houston 17

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Calvillo given weekly honour
Montreal quarterback Anthony Calvillo was named CFL offensive player of the week after leading the Alouettes to a 56-18 rout of B.C. THE CANADIAN PRESS

PAUL CONNORS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Victoria's Steve Nash is leading the charge for a renewed Phoenix squad.

Flying out of orbit

Nash's Suns are off to an impressive 11-3 start

The Phoenix Suns are supposed to be an aging NBA afterthought, a franchise that a couple of years ago saw its best title shot slip away.

Few could have foreseen the way this team has bolted out of the starting gate. With Victoria's Steve Nash as good as ever, Amare Stoudemire on the mend and an array of sharpshooters firing away, the Suns are off to an 11-3 start.

Going into last night's action, coach Alvin Gentry's team was tied for the best record in the league.

"It's a lot of fun. My teammates are great," Nash said.

"It makes all the difference in the world when you have that singular vision and everyone buys into it."
Steve Nash

"We're playing in a fun style where we move the ball a lot. We're not really a fastbreak team like we used to be but the ball still moves. I think the guys are just playing hard for one another.

"We enjoy each other on the court and off and it makes all the difference in the world when you have that singular vision and everyone buys into it," he added.

Nobody was talking that way a year ago, when many players, including Nash, weren't buying into new coach Terry Porter's system.

Porter wanted a slower game, a defensive-oriented style, a system that, except for Shaquille O'Neal, failed to match the personnel at hand.

Porter was fired at the all-star break and O'Neal was traded to Cleveland in the off-season. Now the court is wide open for Nash and his teammates to do what they do best.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Whitecaps get new CEO

SOCCER The Vancouver Whitecaps have hired a senior management official from an English Premier League team as their new chief executive officer.

Paul Barber, currently the Tottenham Hotspurs executive director, will begin work with the Whitecaps March 1, the team said in a release yesterday.

He will join president Bob Lenarduzzi and chief operating officer Rachel Lewis in heading up the Whitecaps' executive team as the club moves towards joining Major League Soccer in 2011. "Paul brings the stature of our club to the next level and we are thrilled to add such an invaluable asset," Lenarduzzi said in a release. "He has an incredible international network and set of skills in both the technical and commercial areas that will no doubt help us reach our vision of being one of the best sports franchises in the world."

Barber, 42, joined Tottenham's board of directors in 2005. He is responsible for all of the club's key operational divisions, including commercial areas, ticketing and hospitality, international tours and friendly matches.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pujols nabs 2nd straight MVP award

BASEBALL Albert Pujols was unanimously voted National League MVP yesterday, becoming the first player to repeat since Barry Bonds won four in a row from 2001-04.

Pujols received all 32 first-place votes and 448 points in balloting announced by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sports in brief

HOCKEY Ottawa Senators starting goaltender Pascal Leclaire will be sidelined about a month with a broken cheekbone.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Lethbridge College names transportation school for gift

Lethbridge College has announced the development of the Crooks School of Transportation, naming the school after Art and Mary Jane Crooks, who made a substantial gift towards the revisioning of the college's Centre of Innovation in Trades and Sustainable Technologies. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Workology

Language dispute

Students at Champlain College, the only English CEGEP in Quebec's Eastern Townships, are unhappy with the Parti Québécois' proposal to limit access to education in English. The party wants stricter language rules to force the majority of students into French colleges. One Chaplain student says more Quebec students are pursuing bilingual or English college education to improve job prospects. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

The pandemic prescription

How a property development exec created a planning 'gold standard'

Cheryl Gray knew she had a problem on her hands when cleaning staff in one of the buildings she was responsible for started showing up to work with masks.

It was the summer of 2003 and severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, had hit Canada's largest city. By the end of the outbreak there were 443 probable cases, with 44 deaths. Tenants in her Toronto buildings were clamouring for information. Was it even safe to touch the elevator buttons?

Gray, a senior vice-president at Canadian property manager and developer Bentall Capital, knew she had to be prepared if there was a next time. "There was a lot of angst amongst tenants and we really didn't have a clear game plan on what to do," Gray said.

What Gray did was create what some describe as the gold standard of pandemic planning for commercial buildings in North America.

Gray's obscure manual is getting more attention today after long lines for H1N1 flu vaccination shots in Ontario created a heightened sense of urgency for Canadian businesses. About 2.5 million people have been vaccinated in three weeks, with 198 deaths across the country.

Apart from the health implications, the virus can have severe consequences on the economy if commercial and retail operations close.

Written in the wake of the SARS epidemic, the manual is considered the go-to document in pandemic preparedness, written on the front lines by property managers like Gray who were at the epicentre of the SARS outbreak.

"We really needed to figure out how you continue to service everyone when all your workers are sick."
Diana Osler-Zortea, president, Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada

"We were caught by surprise with SARS, and Cheryl took the initiative to reach out to the industry so we could collectively come up with a game plan," said Diana Osler-Zortea, president of the Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada, which represents commercial real estate landlords.

"We really needed to figure out how you continue to service everyone when all your workers are sick. How would your business continue in the event of an emergency?"

At the time, Gray was responsible for managing 20 million square feet of properties in eastern Canada, mostly in Toronto. After the SARS outbreak, she got in touch with other members of BOMA, a group whose members include major landlords such as Redcliffe Realty,

Brookfield Properties and Oxford Properties, and formed a group that met monthly for 18 months to prepare the 95-page document now used by building managers worldwide.

The committee used input from not just real estate experts, but legal, insurance and medical experts as well. Toronto microbiologist Dr. Donald Low is also a consultant.

Ralph Dunham, managing director of risk consultancy Marsh Canada Ltd., said he uses the guide as a good starting point for clients. "Not only is it a gold standard in the North American real estate industry, but it is valuable to other non-real estate organizations," he said. "Each company is different, but the principles of preparedness are the same."

The guide looks at basic issues such as how to maintain contact with tenants and employees, preparing for the possibility of closure, travel policies, education and even rent defaults by tenants in the wake of a pandemic.

It discusses whether there is even a legal obligation for owners and building managers to have a pandemic plan. It argues employers have a duty to do this because legislation requires that they maintain a safe workplace.

"We tried to look at everything that could happen," said Gray.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES

VINCE TALOTTA/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES

Cheryl Gray spearheaded an emergency response plan in the wake of SARS in 2003 that has since become the gold standard for pandemic planning.

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New SFU portal
Simon Fraser University has unveiled a new microsite for prospective students called Solutions for the Future. Visitors to the portal can explore programs offered at SFU, read a blog and participate in a short-essay contest for prizes; see sfusolutions.ca. METRO NEWS SERVICES

The making of a seasonal tree

'Tis the **Season**

Over the next few weeks Metro's Workology section will be shining a light on some of the jobs that pop up around the holiday season and dissappear just as quickly afterwards. Check back every Wednesday.

MAT LECOMPTE
for Metro Canada

Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither is the Christmas tree many Canadians will have on display in their homes this holiday season.

Even though it may only take an afternoon to decorate — usually with the help of loved ones, some seasonal music and a couple of glasses of grandpa's cough syrup — the story behind the tree is something much greater.

In fact, by the time the tree has been dressed up and charged with the duty of keeping gifts warm until Christmas morning, it's quite likely to have battled the outdoor elements for seven to 12 years.

At Chickadee Christmas Trees in Cambridge, Ont., owner Alison McCrindle says that growing Christmas trees in her part of the world is no easy task. With extreme heat in the summer, unique soil conditions and the possibility of disease that can ruin a year's crop all in play, growing a Christmas tree may be a little more difficult than you think.

McCrindle's farm sits on eight acres of land and is capable of growing about 8,000 trees. Every year, she estimates, they sell about 1,000, which means that every year she and her family get out on the farm, dig the holes, plant the seeds and make sure they're watered and later pruned.

They grow Scotch pines, white spruce, balsam fir and white pine trees, each with different features to cater to customers' various needs.

"Some people like the Scotch pine because they like the way it smells," she says. "It reminds people of the traditional Christmas."

She says, however, that fir trees are becoming more popular because of the longer life span and shorter needles.

Located about 45 minutes from Toronto, the farm sells pre-cut trees or lets people go out and harvest their own. They provide saws and sleds, as well as activities for the kids.

For those who need a little warming up, there is apple cider available to complete the experience.

Some people, of course, think it's more effective to save themselves the trouble and just buy a fake plastic tree. However, McCrindle is quick to point out the misconceptions many have when making that decision.

"I'm a believer in the real tree," she says. "Environmentally, it's a better decision."

She explained that Christmas trees are crops, and not simply picked from a forest with no regard. Over the seven to 12 years they take to mature, they produce oxygen, while helping the soil. Furthermore, they will never end up in a landfill. Most municipalities now have curb side pickups for used trees, where they are taken, broken down and turned into mulch that can be used for a variety of purposes.

So, there you have it: This symbol of Christmas is much more than a tree-shaped Mr. Dressup. It's the product of lots of hard work, and it took roughly a decade to perfect.

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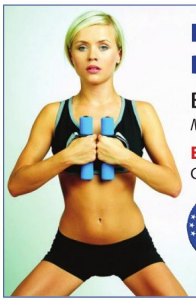
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In the heat of the moment

Sometimes, a resignation isn't what it seems

WorkplaceLaw

Daniel Lublin
metronews.ca/workplacelaw

Following a confrontation with another employee, Barry Upcott stormed into the human resources office at work and suddenly proclaimed that he was finished at his job.

When he then handed in his keys and swiftly left the premises his employer, Savaria Concord Lifts, believed that Upcott had resigned.

Upcott had worked for Savaria for eight years and over time he been told to walk away from arguments and calm down. However, after learning that an important project had been delayed,

Upcott angrily spoke with a co-worker, demanding that she get a part to complete the order. The co-worker immediately emailed the director of human resources, Bruce Hayes, to complain.

Once Upcott learned of the complaint, he walked into Hayes' office and announced that he was "done" thinking that he was the guilty party in the argument.

After handing in his keys and walking out of the office, Upcott then announced he was leaving to two other employees and made two separate trips back and forth to his car to pack up his personal belongings before going home.

Assuming that Upcott had resigned from his job, the company quickly moved to delete Upcott's access to his BlackBerry and then promptly called him at home to confirm that it viewed his actions as a resignation and that a letter was being couriered to him later that afternoon. Importantly, Upcott was not asked for his version of the events or whether he had truly wished to resign.

"Although Upcott had suggested he was resigning, all of his actions occurred in the heat of the moment and without having been given an opportunity to consider his actions or change his mind."

Upcott recently decided to challenge his employer's interpretation of the events and sued for wrongful dismissal. Surprisingly, a judge rejected Savaria's argument that Upcott had resigned and found that instead, he had actually been fired.

Although Upcott had suggested he was resigning, all of his actions occurred in the heat of the moment and without having been given an opportunity to consider his actions or change his mind.

Canadian courts consistently reject that employees have resigned unless it was clear that this was their true intention. Here, the employer had an obligation to encourage Upcott to reconsider his actions rather than swiftly accept what it viewed was his resignation. By cutting off Upcott's BlackBerry access and couriering him a letter accepting his purported resignation, Savaria had effectively terminated his employment.

To avoid such misconceptions, employees who have indicated an intention to resign should be given the benefit of time to consider their true intentions and then asked to confirm their plans in writing as employees are free to change their mind even after expressing an intention to voluntarily leave.

Daniel A. Lublin is an employment lawyer focusing on the law of dismissal; dan@toronto-employmentlawyer.com.

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ASL and Deaf Studies (Full-time) Wednesday, Dec. 2, 6 p.m. – room 2559	Broadway
Baking and Pastry Arts Wednesday, Dec. 2, 10:30 a.m. – room 216	Downtown

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Sonata with direct injection
Hyundai has unveiled its first direct-injection gasoline engine, which is expected to first appear in the redesigned Sonata in the first half of 2010. CANADIANDRIVER.COM

Metro Drive

Mazda2 on its way

The 2011 Mazda2 will make its North American debut at the 2009 Los Angeles Auto Show next month, and will be sold in Canada and the U.S. beginning in late 2010. The Mazda2 was named the 2008 World Car of the Year. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: KUMAR SAHA, KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

VW Golf on the double

LORNE DRURY
for Metro Canada

Volkswagen welcomes a new addition to the Golf family for 2010, the Golf Wagon that replaces the Jetta Wagon in the lineup.

This is the sixth generation of the Golf, which has sold more than 26 million units around world in the past 35 years, making it the all-time best selling model for Volkswagen, surpassing even the legendary Beetle.

During those years, the Golf has also been known as the Rabbit in North America, but that name is gone for 2010 as the car returns as a Golf on this side of the ocean.

Volkswagen calls the Golf family "the most comprehensive model lineup available to Canadian consumers" and it's hard to argue, considering the addition of the Wagon to the lineup.

Golf is now a family of four with the three- and five-door hatchbacks and the "hot hatch" GTI in addition to the Wagon.

In fact, there are even more variations when you consider the GTI is offered in both three- and five-door models.

It is the largest Golf ever, with the most interior room and plenty of leg and headroom.

Above, the original hatchback is back in the form of the 2010 Volkswagen Golf GTI; right, The Jetta Wagon is gone for 2010, replaced by a new Golf Wagon, the biggest Golf ever offered.

About 75 per cent of all Jetta Wagons sold in Canada these days are diesels and Volkswagen expects that trend to carry over with the Golf Wagon.

This car really has no competition in the marketplace— it's the only clean diesel compact wagon available.

In fact, it achieves slightly better fuel economy than the six-speed manual transmission, while shifting gears precisely within four one-hundredths of a second. It also has a range of 1,190 kilometres on a tank of fuel.

The Wagon starts at $22,675 for the Trendline model with five-speed manual transmission.

A six-speed automatic adds $1,400 to the price tag.

Meanwhile, the original GTI is back for another go-around.

It's priced $700 more than last year, but has more standard features.

Among the features on the GTI, priced from $28,675 to $31,075 are bi-xenon adaptive front headlights, a premium touch screen audio system,

Sirius satellite radio and Bluetooth connectivity. Options include a luxury leather package ($2,600), a Technology Package ($1,900), power sunroof ($1,400), 18-inch alloy wheels with all-season tires ($975) and rear side airbags ($450).

2010 VW Golf Wagon & GTI

Type: five-door wagon and three- and five-door hatchback GTI
Price: $22,675 to $31,875, GTI, $28,675 to $31,075

Highlights

- Plenty of interior and leg room in the wagon
- Only clean diesel compact wagon available in the market
- More standard features in GTI model

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Ford Fusion Motor Trend's Car of the Year
The Ford Fusion has been named Motor Trend's 2010 Car of the Year. The 2010 edition marks the award's 60th year, the longest-standing editorial automotive award of its time. CANADIANDRIVER.COM

There's a stranger under the hood

Stay out of the engine compartment."
That's what you automakers are saying, or at least implying, when we owners lift the hood of our cars, and are confronted with nicely-finished plastic coverings as far as the eye can see — but precious little actual mechanical or electrical components.

Some makes, like BMW, have even got rid of the engine oil dipstick, replacing it with a sensor and a dash readout.

I didn't ask to be born this way, but I am one of those people, and I know there are more than a few of us, who actually like to pull out the engine oil dipstick on occasion, to check the level, AND to contemplate the cleanliness of said engine oil. See it with our eyes, so to speak.

The other reason I would lament the demise of the dipstick, is that it just might be one of the best words in the automotive lexicon. Dipstick.

You can't even say it, without the slight anticipatory joy of maybe using it to describe a loved one or a colleague in the near future.

Try that with its possible successor… "I can't believe you just did that, you, you sensor with a dash readout." Just doesn't ring true.

But with or without the dipstick, the entire plasticized engine compartment is still, in my books, a questionable modern advancement.

As we mentioned right off the top, it basically says, "don't touch." Do they think most of want to fondle an exhaust gas recirculation valve, just for the fun of it? Give us a bit of credit here. It's a bit like those labels on aerosol shaving cream cans that advise us to keep them away from open flames. I mean, even if you did that once, you'd never do it again.

The other aspect that galls is that it's hard to see the actual design of the engine components and of the engine itself. Sometimes you can't even tell if it's a four- or a six-cylinder motor under that maze of wires and plastic.

Back in the day when engine compartments were less busy, you'd proudly throw open the hood to show off the sheer bulk of your big-block V8 — a very recognizable shape. Lots of engines were equally visually interesting and recognizable, like VW's flat-four, Chrysler's slant six, and Jaguar's DOHC straight six.

Does anybody know what his or her engine looks like these days? Would you recognize your Camry's 2.4-litre I4 if it accosted you on the sidewalk one day?

My final point, is that an engine compartment that looks like the insides of a computer, is just another marker in the road that's evolving the automobile into more of a commodity and/or appliance, and to a place where it is less defined by what it's packing, "under the hood."

Michael Goetz has been writing about cars and editing automotive publications for over 20 years. He lives in Toronto with his family and a neglected 1967 Jaguar E-type.

The well-masked engine compartment of the Lexus GS 450h.

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The 2010 Toyota FJ Cruiser

Toyota FJ Cruiser: Adventure upgraded

2010 MODEL Toyota Canada has just announced that for 2010, the FJ Cruiser has adopted an upgraded more powerful and fuel efficient engine, and improved suspension tuning and power steering.

"As with the legendary Land Cruisers that inspired it, the Toyota FJ Cruiser has developed an enthusiastic and loyal following of owners who value maximum capability and utility to help realize their adventures — from deep woods camping and back country skiing to navigating the urban jungle," said Warren Orton, director at Toyota Canada Inc.

"This year we've made some great changes under the hood to deliver more power with less fuel required and enhanced suspension and steering. The result: the 2010 FJ is even more capable on the trail, yet equally comfortable to drive on the pavement."

Also available for the 2010 model is a brand new colour, Army Green.

The new Cruiser with six-speed manual transmission carries a manufacturer's suggested retail price starting at $31,500. FROM CARGUIDE

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Ford Recycle Your Ride incentives are rainchecked. Ford Recycle Your Ride incentives are not available on any vehicle receiving Commercial Fleet Incentive Program, Competitive Price Allowance or Government Price Concession, Fleet Delivery Allowance, or Daily Rental Incentives. By participating in this program you will not be eligible for any trade-in value for your old vehicle. The Government of Canada's "Retire Your Ride Program" is not available to residents of Northwest Territories, Yukon or Nunavut and, therefore, Ford Recycle Your Ride incentives are also not available to residents of North West Territories Yukon or Nunavut. Other provincially specific rewards may be available in association with the government's "Retire Your Ride program", for more information visit retireyourride.ca. Limited time offer, see dealer for details or call the Ford Customer Relationship Centre at 1-800-565-3673. ©2009 Ford Motor Company of Canada, Limited. All rights reserved. ††See your Ford of Canada Dealer or contact SIRIUS at 1-888-539-7474 for more information. "SIRIUS" and the SIRIUS dog logo are registered trademarks of SIRIUS Satellite Radio Inc. Includes 6 month prepaid subscription. †††Fuel consumption ratings are based on Transport Canada approved test methods. Actual fuel consumption may vary based on road conditions, vehicle loading, driving habits and the addition of certain vehicle accessories. Fuel efficiency figures based on the 2010 Ford Focus S 2.0L-I4 5-speed manual/2010 Ford Fusion S FWD 2.5L-I4 6-speed manual. ▼Based on estimated fuel consumption ratings; Fusion Hybrid 4.6L/100km city and 5.4L/100km hwy or Fusion S, 14 automatic 8.9L/100km city and 5.8L/100km hwy (excluding hybrid). Midsize class per R.L. Polk & Co. (U.S.)/Intermediate per R. L. Polk Canada, Inc. Limited quantities of Fusion S available in Canada. ***Most 2010 Ford vehicles, excluding 2010 Model LCF, F-650 and F-750, come with a 5 year/100,000 km (whichever occurs first) Powertrain Warranty and full Roadside Assistance benefits together with a 5 year/100,000 km (whichever occurs first) Safety Restraint Warranty. In addition, on all 2010 Model F-Super Duty vehicles equipped with the diesel engine, the Powertrain Warranty is extended to 5 year/160,000 km (whichever occurs first), which equals the diesel engine warranty. Some conditions and limitations apply. See your Ford Dealer for complete details or call the Ford Customer Relationship Centre at 1-800-565-3673. ▲Class is five-passenger large cars equipped with standard and optional driver-centric technology features.

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Rosie home alone

Living single is less than rosy for Rosie O'Donnell. "I'm not (enjoying the single life)," O'Donnell said. "But on we grow, so to speak." Earlier this month, she revealed partner Kelli Carpenter had moved out two years ago. PEOPLE.COM

Entertainment

Cougar shoot

Cougar Town, which stopped filming last week so Courteney Cox could attend to a "family matter," resumes production Monday following a week-long break for U.S. Thanksgiving. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Old Dogs lacks bite

Old Dogs

Director: Walt Becker
Stars: Robin Williams, John Travolta, Seth Green
Classification: G
Rating: 2½

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

John Travolta stars in Old Dogs.

REVIEW Old Dogs is tailor-made for airline travel. The plot, characters, and themes are so watered down that it's impossible for anyone to be offended, while the jokes are so tired that they will only induce laughter from audiences woozy from high altitudes.

Though not the worst movie ever made, Old Dogs is definitely high in the ranks for the blandest.

Robin Williams and John Travolta star as two long-time business partners with incredible financial success, but no family life.

That changes when a memorable fling from Williams' past pops up with two children that he never knew he had and insists that he care for them while she goes to prison.

That set up was never going to lead to a great movie, but it is surprising that it lead to a film in which Travolta battles CGI penguins and Williams flies into the climax wearing a jetpack.

The writers were so desperate to wring jokes out of this outdated material that they frequently rely on bizarre fantasy slapstick sequences that are ludicrously out of place.

Old Dogs is a failure and an unfortunate one. In the difficult realm of family comedy, filmmakers often rely on the broadest possible jokes to prod giggles out of kids. Old Dogs features a fart joke, a urine joke, and a poop joke before 30 minutes pass.

Family audiences with low expectations might chuckle, but children's comedies don't have to be like this. These days it's clear that children appreciate sophisticated stories and humour when it's geared to them (as in Up!), making movies like Old Dogs feel like relics.

Screentimes

- Fifth Avenue Cinemas: Wed-Thu 1:45-3:45-6-8-10
- Park & Tilford: Wed-Thu 7-9:40
- SilverCity Riverport: Wed-Thu 11:35-2:20-4:50-7:15-9:55
- SilverCity Metropolis: Wed-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:30-9:45
- SilverCity Coquitlam: Wed-Thu 11:50-2:20-5:10-7:35-10:05
- Strawberry Hill Grande: Wed-Thu 12:05-2:20-4:50-7:35-10:10
- Studio 12 Guildford: Wed-Thu 12:40-3:40-6:40-9:15

On the web

- For Od Dogs photos, trailer and screentimes — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

Wes Anderson makes his first foray into feature-length stop motion animation with the adaptation of Roald Dahl's The Fantastic Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox a visual feast

Wes Anderson adapts Roald Dahl novel for the big screen

The Fantastic Mr. Fox

Director: Wes Anderson
Stars: George Clooney, Meryl Streep, Jason Schwartzman
Classification: PG
Rating: 4

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

REVIEW American film's reigning leader in quirky comedy, picture box imagery, and British Invasion soundtracks has returned. Wes Anderson is back with arguably his most visually impressive work to date.

Using Roald Dahl's novel The Fantastic Mr. Fox as a springboard, the director makes his first foray into feature-length stop motion animation. The film is a visual feast and a triumph for Anderson. The detail in his sets and puppets is remarkable, requiring endless hours of labour from the behind-the-scenes artisans without losing a charmingly handmade quality.

Anderson and co-writer Noah Baumbach use the plot of Dahl's fairly short book for the second act of their story, while adding embellishments for the opening and conclusion. The film still centres on Mr. Fox (dryly voiced by George Clooney) and his battles with three local farmers, but now features a fully developed backstory for the characters and world.

As a result, it feels more like an Anderson film than a Roald Dahl adaptation (Dahl's gallows black humour and dark subtext take a back seat to Anderson's quirky character beats and New Yorker-friendly cultural references). The combination works, but the film will probably play better with fans of the filmmaker than fans of the author.

With Anderson's style and tone dominating The Fantastic Mr. Fox, it's difficult to predict how it will play with children. Will they appreciate the deadpan comedy and hipster-friendly soundtrack? Maybe not, but it's difficult to imagine anyone failing to be charmed by this thoroughly entertaining film.

As a technical achievement it's remarkable and as a piece of storytelling it's alternately hilarious, surreal, and oddly touching. Pixar's incredible streak of animated excellence has raised the bar for family entertainment and it's nice to see films like The Fantastic Mr. Fox and Coraline getting produced as a result.

Screentimes

- Fifth Avenue Cinemas: Wed-Thu 1:45-3:45-6-8-10
- Park & Tilford: Wed-Thu 7-9:40
- SilverCity Riverport: Wed-Thu 11:35-2:20-4:50-7:15-9:55
- SilverCity Metropolis: Wed-Thu 12-2:30-5-7:30-9:45
- SilverCity Coquitlam: Wed-Thu 11:50-2:20-5:10-7:35-10
- Strawberry Hill Grande: Wed-Thu 12:05-2:20-4:50-7:35-10:10
- Studio 12 Guildford: Wed-Thu 12:40-3:40-6:40-9:15
- Times are subject to change. Complete listings available at metronews.ca/movies.

On the web

- For The Fantastic Mr. Fox photos, trailer and screentimes — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

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Ninja packs punch

Ninja **Assassin**

Director: James McTeigue
Stars: Rain, Naomie Harris, Sho Kosugi
Classification: 18A
Rating: ⊕⊕⊕½

LINA TOYODA
for Metro Canada

Ninja Assassin is a modern take on an old story.

Martial arts, anime appeal and modern action filmmaking is alive and well in Ninja Assassin, the latest by director James McTeigue (V for Vendetta).

A modern take on an old story, the movie shows blood-spitting ninja fight sequences with manga-like exaggeration. And who doesn't like ninjas?

McTeigue opts for flashy visual effects and darkened artistry, mixing up a traditional genre with modern-day action, complete with secret agents, Europol and a brigade of armed agents with machine guns.

The ripped and conflicted protagonist Raizo is played by Korean pop star Rain, who proves he can chop the part in a martial arts flick, however modernized with acrobatic moves and blood-gore effects.

They couldn't resist throwing in a reference to his boy-band past when an agent makes a comment on his looks.

The storyline gets a little convoluted when Europol gets involved in the ninja-genre story of frayed loyalties and retribution.

The setting jumps to Berlin where forensic researcher Mika Coretti, played be Naomie Harris (28 Days Later), defies the orders of her superior when she discovers a money trail that leads to the elusive assassins of the east.

She quickly becomes the target of the deadly Ozuno Clan who seem to have considerably enhanced qualities, moving like shadowy figures with silence and stealth, until they face the main character Raizo.

Raizo's back story is solid in martial arts style, an orphan who is trained to be a killer, enduring harsh discipline in training sequences, a conflict of loyalty and forbidden love.

Martial arts master Sho Kosugi plays the ruthless father of the Ozuno Clan, adding presence to the genre, delivering lines of wisdom, read like broken scriptures of ancient or a debased Jedi Knighthood.

Although the movie packs some serious action punch with fight scenes that are wickedly vivid and bloody, there are a few moments that reveal its weaknesses, from cheesy one-liners to borderline acting.

But if Quentin Tarantino's style can be said to stay true in the retro realm, McTeigue ventures into new territory by molding old influences like film noir, B-movie horror, anime and martial arts into a modern action film in Ninja Assassin.

On the web

- For Ninja Assassin photos, trailer and screen times — or to buy tickets — visit metronews.ca/movies

Screentimes

- Scotiabank Theatre Vancouver: Wed-Thu 12:10-2:40-5:15-7:50-10:20
- Esplanade 6: Wed-Thu 7:10-9:35
- Richmond Centre 6: Wed-Thu 4:15-7:10
- SilverCity Riverport: Wed-Thu 12:20-3:25-6:50-10:05
- SilverCity Metropolis: Wed-Thu 12:45-3:30-7-9:50
- SilverCity Coquitlam: Wed-Thu 1:40-4:40-7:35-10:20
- Strawberry Hill Grande: Wed-Thu 12:35-3:35-6:55-9:30
- Studio 12 Guildford: Wed-Thu 12:55-3:45-6:55-9:30
- Complete listings are also available at metronews.ca/movies.

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 11/25/09	251	308	3 CBC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Dragons' Den (N) (CC)		Geologic Journey (CC)		CBC News: The National (N)		(:05) The Hour
	254	-	9 OMNI	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Omni News: Mandarin Edition		News: Cantonese Edition		Omni News: Punjabi Edition		The Simpsons
	250	321	9 CTV	etalk (CC)	Access H.	Medium (N) (CC)		Criminal Minds "100" (N)		CSI: NY "Manhattanhenge"		CTV News
	-	-	10 JOY	Frasier (CC)	The Insider	The Practice "Oz" (CC)		Third Watch "Unleashed"		Perspectives	Ek Noor	New Day
	252	336	11 GTV	Entertainment	ET Canada	Bones (CC)		Glee "Hairography" (N) (CC)		Melrose Place "Grand" (CC)		News
	256	389	12 VI	Degrassi: TNG	TMZ (N) (CC)	So You Think You Can Dance		Ghost Whisperer (CC)		(:01) Eastwick (N) (CC)		A News (N)
	253	359	13 CITY	The Biggest Loser "Where Are They Now" (N) (CC)				Family	Cougar Town	The Jay Leno Show (N) (CC)		The CityNews
	-	-	14 CW	The Office	The Office	Gracie ★★ (2007, Drama) Dermot Mulroney, Elisabeth Shue.				Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15 CBS	Entertainment	The Insider	Old Christine	Gary Unmarr	Criminal Minds "100" (N)		CSI: NY "Manhattanhenge"		KIRO 7 News
	287	379	16 NBC	Evening Mag.	Inside Edition	The Biggest Loser "Where Are They Now" (N) (CC)				The Jay Leno Show (N) (CC)		KING 5 News
	602	568	19 W	Old Christine	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Grocery Bag	Grocery Bag	Yourself Sexy	Chef Worthy	Fearl-Kitchen	Supersize
	288	380	24 ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Family	The Middle	Family	Cougar Town	(:01) Eastwick (N) (CC)		KOMO 4 News
	-	-	26 KVOS	M*A*S*H	Seinfeld	Patch Adams ★★ (1999) Robin Williams, Daniel London.				Seinfeld	King	Cheers (CC)
	291	383	27 PBS	OpenRoad	Steves Europe	Secrets of the Dead (N)		American Masters (CC)			American Masters (CC)	
	290	382	28 FOX	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	So You Think You Can Dance		Glee "Hairography" (N) (CC)		Q13 FOX News at Ten (N)		Family Guy
	-	364	43 PBS	Amer. Masters	Pete Seeger: Live-Australia		Keeping Up	Tavis Smiley	Charlie Rose (N) (CC)		Secrets of the Dead	
	296	654	34 SBK	The Office	Name Is Earl	Frasier (CC)	'70s Show	South Park	Half & Half	Net Millions	Hatchett	Paid Program
	298	653	35 TLA	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Gracie ★★ (2007, Drama) Dermot Mulroney, Elisabeth Shue.				KTLA Prime News (N) (CC)		Friends (CC)
	295	651	36 WGN	WGN News at Nine (N) (CC)		Family Guy	Two/Half Men	According-Jim	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Maury (CC)	
	297	652	37 WPX	PIX News at Ten Tong. (N)		Two/Half Men	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	According-Jim	Family Guy	South Park	Scrubs (CC)
	199	311	76 STR	CTV News	NTV Latenight News		Late Show-Letterman		Late Late Show		Inside Edition	Seinfeld
news	502	390	23 NW	Planet Earth "Jungles" (CC)		CBC News: The National (N)		CBC News: The National (N)		Planet Earth "Jungles" (CC)		National
	500	500	33 CNN	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)				Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		Cooper 360
sports	407	419	22 RSP	Hockey Subway Super Series: Russia vs. WHL. From Victoria, BC. (Live)						Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Ult. Fighter
	400	400	30 TSN	(6:30) NHL Hockey Phoenix Coyotes at Calgary Flames. (Live)				SportsCentre	E:60 (CC)		Timbersports	SportsCentre
	411	457	49 OLN	Ghost Hunters International		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman (CC)		Ghost Hunters International		Bounty Hunter
	410	403	54 SCR	(6:30) Court Surfing		Score Now		Score Now		Score Now		Final Score
	417	406	55 SC	Wrecked	Wrecked	Pass Time	Pass Time	Thunder	Pinks Out	Pass Time	Pass Time	Wrecked
	416	409	144 GLF	Fútbol Español		Sixty Plus		Gol TV News	Foot Brazil	Paid Program	Gol TV News	Gol TV News
family	552	543	25 YTV	Drake & Josh	That's-Weird	Malcolm-Mid.	Hates Chris	8 Rules	What I Like	Family Biz	Prank Patrol	Adrenaline
	555	545	50 TEL	Scooby-Doo	Total Drama	Total Drama	6TEEN	Futurama	King of Hill	American Dad	Futurama	Chicken
	557	541	51 FAM	Sonny Chance	Zack & Cody	Overruled!	Han. Montana	Wizards-Place	Latest Buzz	Ned's School	Cory in House	That's-Raven
	553	546	53 TRE	Babar (CC)	Big & Small	Max & Ruby	Dragon	Backyard	Ni Hao	Go, Diego, Go!	Franklin	Comfy Couch
cable variety	268	354	5 KNO	Arctic Mission: Climate		Mao: A Chinese Tale (CC)		Suzie LeBlanc Musical Quest		Suzie LeBlanc: Man-Quantz		Stravinsky (N)
	575	583	20 CMT	Home Imp.	Home Imp.	Due South "Letting Go" (CC)		Reba (CC)	Reba (CC)	According-Jim	According-Jim	Home Imp.
	570	580	42 MM	Degrassi: TNG	Degrassi: TNG	One Tree Hill (CC)		America's Best Dance Crew		My Date	Video on Trial	Spotlight
	600	564	48 H&G	House	House	Holmes on Homes (CC)		Unsellable	Intervention	Property	Unsellable	House
	615	520	61 A&E	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Manhunters	Manhunters	(:01) Dog the Bounty Hunter		(:01) Dog the Bounty Hunter		Bounty Hunter
	628	584	62 SPKE	The Ultimate Fighter		Super Dave	Super Dave	Riots: Mobs Out of Control		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.		Trek: Voyager
	521	560	64 TLC	I Didn't Know	I Didn't Know	Cake Boss	Cake Boss	Jon & Kate Plus 8 (CC)		I Didn't Know	I Didn't Know	Little Couple
	616	522	63 SHO	The Outer Limits (CC)		The Guard (CC)		Cra$h & Burn "Trust" (CC)		Bones (CC)		NCIS (CC)
	620	523	40 BVO	White Collar "Flip of the Coin"		Law & Order (CC)		Without a Trace "Baggage"		White Collar "Flip of the Coin"		Entourage
	601	562	41 SLC	In Laws	In Laws	ET Canada	What	The Biggest Loser (CC)		Celebrity Paranormal Project		Trading Sp
	520	505	42 DIS	Mayday "Falling Fast" (N)		Daily Planet (CC)		Mayday "Falling Fast" (CC)		Pitchmen		Mega Builders
	522	506	44 HIS	Ice Pilots NWT (N) (CC)		Life After People (CC)		Ice Road Truckers (CC)		Ice Pilots NWT (CC)		Outlaw Bikers
	627	528	45 SPC	Supernatural (N) (CC)		InnerSpace	Stargate SG-1	"Out of Mind"	Star Trek: Next Gener.		Star Trek: Voyager	"Phage"
	294	650	47 TBS	House-Payne	Meet-Browns	Lopez Tonight (N)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Sex and-City	Sex and-City	Lopez Tonight
	619	525	48 TROP	King	King	The Outer Limits (CC)		ET Canada	What	Family Guy	King	King
	603	561	52 FN	Chopped "Bring It!" (CC)		Chef School	Chef School	Unwrapped	Unwrapped	Chopped "Bring It!" (CC)		Diner, Drive-In
	-	-	53 AMC	(5:00) Batman ★★★ (1989)		Batman Returns ★★ (1992, Action) Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito, Michelle Pfeiffer.						Batman Forevr
	626	547	57 COM	Air Farce	22 Minutes	Corner Gas	Name Is Earl	The Simpsons	South Park	Michael	RENO 911! (N)	Daily Show
	320	621	60 CEN	(6:40) Real Time (2008) (CC)		Balls of Fury ★★ (2007) Dan Fogler. (CC)			StuntDawgs	Lock 'n Load	Drillbit Taylor ★★ (2008)	
	581	566	101 MTV	The City (N)	After	MTV Live	Sex News	The Hills	The Hills	The City	After	MTV Live
	261	394	102 V	(6:00) American Experience		Intelligent Design		American Experience "Monkey Trial"				Paid Program
	-	-	103 MUL	Sewing Maid	Boys Over Flo	Van. Nights	Iranian Pop	Sabor Latino		Sabor Musical	Temas	Patrol World

critics'corner

Gary Unmarried
When Gary (Jay Mohr) lets Louise (Kathryn Newton) attend a party for the "cool kids," he tries to keep it a secret from Allison (Paula Marshall) — which, history shows, is a doomed scenario. At the radio station, Sasha (Brooke D'Orsay) contemplates having more than a working relationship with Gary in the new episode "Gary Keeps a Secret." Keegan-Michael Key co-stars. 8:30 PM on CBS

The New Adventures of Old Christine
"Meanie mom" Lindsay (Alex Kapp Horner) decides to leave her husband after Christine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) convinces her that being single leads to happiness, but Christine is less than ecstatic when Lindsay moves in with her in the new episode "I Love Woo, I Hate Who." Clark Gregg, Hamish Linklater, Emily Rutherfurd and Tricia O'Kelley also star. 8 PM on CBS

Katie Holmes' parenting woes
Katie Holmes is reportedly worried about what type of kid daughter Suri Cruise is turning into, thanks to Tom Cruise's lax parenting style, according to Star magazine. "He never says no to her," a source tells the magazine. METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity Buzz

Pattinson's 'stink' a paparazzi ploy?

SMELLY Robert Pattinson's co-stars agree the young actor smells awful, but one explains why. "He's smart, because if he doesn't changes his clothes and the paparazzi get pictures of him … then they can't sell the pictures," says a co-star.

METRO WORLD NEWS

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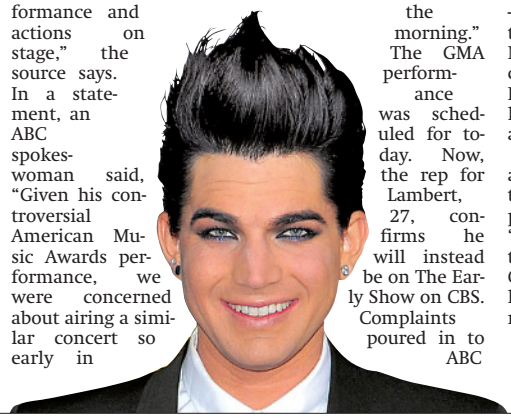
metro

GMA pulls plug on Lambert performance

AMERICAN IDLE Adam Lambert is definitely a showstopper. Good Morning America canceled Lambert's performance for the show's concert series, his rep confirms to Usmagazine.com. (Lambert had no comment.)

A source tells Us it was due to the American Idol alum's shocking showcase at Sunday night's American Music Awards, where he simulated fellatio with a male dancer, kissed his male keyboardist, grabbed his crotch and flipped off the crowd.

"It was due to his performance and actions on stage," the source says. In a statement, an ABC spokeswoman said, "Given his controversial American Music Awards performance, we were concerned about airing a similar concert so early in the morning." The GMA performance was scheduled for today. Now, the rep for Lambert, 27, confirms he will instead be on The Early Show on CBS. Complaints poured in to ABC — the network that aired the AMAs and GMA — on Monday about the sexually charged performance of For Your Entertainment, his first single off his debut album.



According to the Associated Press, ABC said more than 1,500 people complained, what it termed a "moderate" response, and the Parents Television Council also said it had heard from many upset members.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

More details emerge on Mariah's diva demands

NOT-SO-PRECIOUS More details of Mariah Carey's outrageous demands during her trip to London are leaking to the public. After being denied a request to be surrounded by doves and kittens at a tree-lighting ceremony, the singer showed up to an interview with GMTV with a massive entourage that "outnumbered the entire GMTV crew," according to the Daily Mail. Among those traveling with her were one person to walk backward in front of her at all times in case she falls and two people to lower her onto a sofa properly.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Biel warned 'not to bring up marriage' with Timberlake?

SILENT SCREEN Though they're said to be over their rumored rough patch, Justin Timberlake reportedly banned Jessica Beil from mentioning marriage, according to OK! Magazine "Jessica knows that if she and Justin are ever going to have a future, she has to be willing to be patient," a source tells the magazine.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Draco Malfoy comes to Harry Potter's defense over weed pics

THIS WOULD *NEVER* HAPPEN IN THE MOVIE While Daniel Radcliffe is dealing with the fallout from photos of him allegedly smoking marijuana being published, his on-screen nemesis is coming to his defense.

"Obviously Daniel and Emma Watson are under more pressure to keep a squeaky-clean image. When the media fabricates stories I don't think it's really fair on those poor guys," Tom Felton, who plays Draco Malfoy in the Harry Potter films, tells the Telegraph. "He did ring me last week. He's a trouper, he's doing his best. I just reassured him that the vast majority of people are on his side."

METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity tweets

Tila Tequila is working on her own version of the Twilight Saga, Paulo Coelho is worried about voiding his warranty, and Lady Gaga buys her fans some pizza.

• @officialTila It'll be a beautiful, intense love story with Bella & I as we go through our adventures being lesbians,but heartbreak is near as Jacob is 18
• @paulocoelho Going to my wife's birthday dinner, but leaving iPhone at home or it can die from 2nd hand smoking.
• @ladygaga Sending all my little monsters little pizzas for waiting all night for me at Best Buy. I hope you're hungry... eat up I love u!

METRO WORLD NEWS

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Thursday Partly cloudy 8° / 4°

Friday Partly cloudy 40% 6°/ 4°

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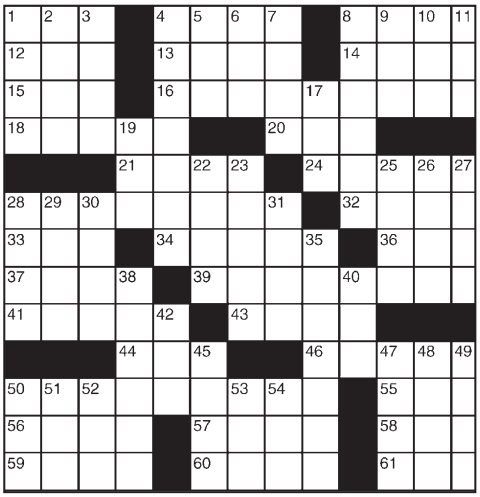
Take Five



Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	1	2				6		
			5	7				9
7					3			4
		8	7		6		5	
	6			9			8	
	5		8		4	2		
3			9					2
8				6	1			
		6				3	4	

ACROSS

1 Pal in the 'hood
4 Actress Jessica
8 Dog owner's ordeal
12 Once around the track
13 Italy's silhouette
14 Pelvic bones
15 In vitro items
16 Cousin of the ibis
18 Yo-Yo Ma's strings
20 — de mer
21 Killer whale
24 Linguini sauce
28 Keep growing rapidly
32 Go with the eagles
33 Intention
34 Hairnet
36 "Mamma —!"
37 Slender
39 Where to "think outside the bun"
41 Bristles, biologically
43 Sullen
44 Meadow
46 Judge's prop
50 Letter from the Vatican
55 Ram's mate
56 Newspaper page
57 Furniture store name
58 Afternoon affair
59 Moist in the morn
60 Links supply
61 Mork's home planet
1 United nations

DOWN

2 Carry on
3 October birthstone
4 Soaks up
5 Prune
6 Greet the villain
7 Fermi's tidbit
8 Cross references?
9 "The Greatest"
10 Up to, in verse
11 Actor Holbrook
17 Siesta
19 Despondent
22 Lacks the ability
23 "Get — of this!"
25 A handful
26 Do surveillance on
27 Exam format
28 Back talk
29 Cleo's water
30 Leave out
31 Crazy
35 Gen. MacArthur
38 Ailment
40 Underwear with underwire
42 Slithery fish
45 Slightly
47 Presidential power
48 Basin accessory
49 Security problem
50 Spacecraft compartment
51 Mimic
52 Church seat
53 Guitar's kin
54 Shelter

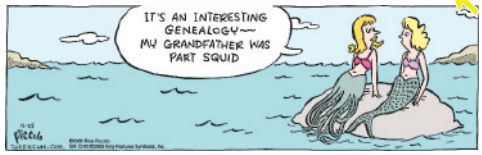
PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

F	L	A	T		C	A	P	S		H	E	M		
C	O	L	A		A	G	U	E		O	V	A		
C	U	B	B	Y	H	O	L	E		B	I	T		
			K	I	N	G		S	A	B	L	E		
O	F	T	E	N			C	A	R	Y				
D	R	A	Y		B	R	O	W	S	I	N	G		
D	A	B		B	E	A	D	S		S	E	A		
S	U	B	P	O	E	N	A		S	T	A	R		
		Y	O	U	R			D	U	S	T	Y		
P	A	C	E	R		C	A	R	P					
E	T	A		B	O	B	B	Y	P	I	N	S		
P	O	T		O	R	E	L		L	O	O	K		
E	M	S		N	A	R	Y		E	N	V	Y		

1	7	9	8	5	6	4	3	2
3	8	5	2	4	1	6	7	9
6	4	2	9	3	7	8	5	1
8	5	4	3	9	2	1	6	7
2	6	1	4	7	5	3	9	8
7	9	3	1	6	8	2	4	5
9	2	7	6	1	3	5	8	4
5	1	6	7	8	4	9	2	3
4	3	8	5	2	9	7	1	6

On the web

For more games and 60 additional daily cartoon strips, visit metronews.ca



Metro Recipe of the Day

Basmati Pilaf with Tikka Chicken

INGREDIENTS:

4 skinless chicken breast fillets
1 garlic clove, chopped
1 tbsp (15 ml) tikka spice mix
2 tbsp (25 ml) canola oil
1 onion, sliced
1 1/3 cups (325 ml) basmati rice, rinsed
2 1/2 cups (625 ml) hot vegetable stock
1/3 cup (75 ml) raisins
1 tbsp (15 ml) chopped cilantro
3 1/2 oz (100 g) cherry tomatoes, halved
3 tbsp (45 ml) toasted pine nuts

METHOD:

1. Cut chicken breast fillets into strips and mix with half each of garlic and tikka spice. Marinate while you cook pilaf, turning chicken strips after 10 minutes.
2. Heat canola oil in large pot, add onion and remaining garlic, and cook gently 3 minutes. Mix in basmati rice, then remaining spice powder. Preheat ridged grill pan.
3. Pour hot stock into rice with 1/2 tsp (2 ml) salt and raisins. Boil, then simmer. Cover and cook 10 minutes without lifting lid. Liquid should have been absorbed. If necessary, cover and cook 2 minutes more. Add cilantro and tomatoes, stir and remove from heat. Leave 5 minutes, then fork pine nuts through rice gently.
4. Grill chicken strips until just firm, turning once. Spoon pilaf into serving dish and put chicken on top. Serve with lemon wedges.

SERVES 4

rd.ca

For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton sallybrompton.com

For Sally's expanded daily and weekend horoscopes, visit metronews.ca

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
One way or another the next few weeks are going to be extra special, so put your worries and woes behind you and get ready to have some fun.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Once you cross a certain line there is no going back and you should bear that thought in mind today. That line is there for a reason: as a warning.

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
Relationships will be much in your thoughts over the next 24 hours but don't make any major decisions until the weekend at the earliest.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
This is one of the busiest times of the year for you, but no matter how much work there may be on your plate right now you must not go to extremes.

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
You have been rather subdued in your enthusiasms in recent weeks but that will change quite dramatically. Watch out world, Leo is back on the prowl!

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Family matters are going to take up a large slice of your time and energy. Don't let other people's needs eclipse your own.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
For best results you should adopt an easy come, easy go attitude, especially towards money. Chances are you will be too busy having fun to worry.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
According to the planets you are moving too fast for your own good at the moment. What's the rush? Slow down. Take your time.

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
It seems there is one final thing you must do, one final loose end you must tie up, before you can let your hair down and have some fun.

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
Over the next few weeks you'll no doubt feel melancholy at times, but that is natural. You may be down now but you'll be up, up and away later on.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
You could soon find yourself moving in a new direction, with a new set of aims and with a new group of friends.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
You seem to be more concerned than usual about your position in society and whether or not you are making the most of your talents.

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